

Clinton, Schumer, Nadler, Maloney and Fossella Welcome CDC's First Step to Provide 9/11 Health Care for Area Residents, Workers, Students and Others

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer, Representatives Jerrold Nadler, Carolyn B. Maloney and Vito Fossella today welcomed an announcement that the Department of Health and Human Services has finally agreed to release funding to provide health care to area residents, workers, students, and others whose health was adversely affected by the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

Last year, Congress passed, and the President signed into law, the Fiscal Year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which included \$108 million to address the mounting health needs of first responders, residents, area workers, students, and others who were exposed to environmental hazards released as a result of the attacks on 9/11. However, the Bush Administration has been dragging its feet in releasing any of this funding to the local community until now. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will be issuing a request for proposals to provide medical monitoring and treatment to sick community members who have not yet received any federal funding.

“While this action is long overdue on the Administration's part, I am pleased to see that they are finally releasing these funds, as Congress intended,” said Senator Clinton. “There is no excuse for not addressing the very real needs of residents, students, and office workers experiencing adverse health impacts following the 9/11 attacks. Studies have clearly documented the illnesses experienced by community members in the aftermath of 9/11. New York City has started a program to help treat these people, and I am hopeful that this additional federal contribution will allow us to reach all those in need of care. I look forward to working with the CDC on implementation of this program.”

“This is a much needed change of course from an Administration that has turned a blind eye to the needs of non-responders who are suffering the crippling health effects of the 9/11 attacks,” said Senator Schumer. “This long overdue funding is a very good start but must only be the beginning of a long-term commitment to help responders and residents, workers, students and others affected by 9-11 and its aftermath.”

“This funding is long overdue, but I am hopeful that CDC will quickly begin providing for the health care of the thousands of area residents, workers, students, and others who became sick as a result of 9/11,” said Rep. Nadler. “Congress specifically directed the CDC to provide for the health of everyone whose health was undermined by the environmental impacts of 9/11, and my colleagues and I have fought tooth and nail to see that these people were provided with the care they need. As we approach the 7th anniversary of 9/11, I am relieved that the Bush Administration has given up their stall tactics and finally begun to release this funding.”

“Nearly seven years after 9/11, we finally have the first baby step toward providing care for area residents, workers, and others sickened by the attacks,” said Rep. Maloney. “However, it’s unclear who will administer this program since the administration just fired its 9/11 health czar simply for doing his job. Delays and unanswered questions have been the only constants in this administration’s response to the health impacts of 9/11. In the years to come, the CDC’s actions or lack thereof will be seen as a case study in how not to respond to a public health disaster.”

Rep. Fossella said,
“The release of this funding is essential to ensuring that those who are sick today or who fall ill in the future continue to have access to both the monitoring and medical care they need and deserve.”

Reps. Nadler, Maloney, Fossella and Rep. Peter King have also introduced the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, a bipartisan bill which would provide comprehensive medical treatment to any person whose health was affected by the 9/11 attacks, and reopen the Victim Compensation Fund so that people can be compensated for their economic losses.